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ESSAYS
ON THE
PHILOSOPHY OF INSTRUCTION.

1835



ESSAYS
ON THE
PHILOSOPHY
OF
INSTRUCTION,
OR THE
NURTURE OF YOUNG MINDS.

*By Rev. Samuel Willard
of Deerfield, Mass.*

FOURTH EDITION.

A. PHELPS, GREENFIELD, MASS.
1835.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is about ten years since the first publication of the following Essays. In many towns, considerable changes have taken place in the lapse of these ten years, and some of the remarks contained in the Essays are no longer applicable to them. It is believed, however, that the community in general is yet very far from realizing the importance of the principle, which the author has endeavored to prove and enforce.

IN EXCHANGE

BOS. ANTH

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ESSAY I.

THE present is emphatically an age of philosophical inquiry and of corresponding improvement in the various arts of life. No former period has been so generally characterised by a disposition to question the truth of those *principles* and the utility of those customs, which appear to have no better foundation, than that of antiquity, or common consent. This remark applies to politics and civil government, to agriculture, and to most of the mechanic arts.

In surveying the ancient world, as presented in civil history, we observe here and there a luminous region of some little extent. In successive ages many of the arts and sciences shone forth with great lustre in Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, Phœnicia, Greece, and Italy. In general, however, these lights were surrounded with great darkness. There was no *sun* in the intellectual heavens, to diffuse a powerful and impartial influence through

all nations, nor indeed through either hemisphere or quarter of the globe. There was no constellation of *smaller* orbs, unitedly struggling with the darkness of the times. Scarcely two stars appeared at once in their full magnitude and splendor. Generally, when one rose, another declined, or passed under a cloud.

In the most civilized nations of antiquity the arts of *war* were preferred to the arts of *peace*.—The principal labor and study of mankind was to *destroy* men's lives, not to *save, improve, and bless*. The nominal patriot loved, or pretended to love his own country even to idolatry. To that deity he was ready to sacrifice the principles of justice and humanity. It was enough that his country was preeminent in national splendor;—and it was a matter of little concern, whether this object were secured by improving the state of things, or by spreading ruin and misery among the nations around. The spirit of war, indeed, the source of almost every evil, which has afflicted the world, has been characteristic of all ages, from that of Nimrod down to the present. War has been the grand enterprise of all generations and almost all nations; and it has absorbed so much of their time, and property, and strength, and zeal, and invention, as to leave compara-

tively nothing for those works of peace, for which these resources and endowments were exclusively designed.

While the world in general has been thus eagerly engaged in murder and plunder, and devastation, some few in different periods, have kept aloof from scenes of blood, and from those careers of ambition, which are connected with them, and have devoted their time and their zeal to study. To these we are indebted for a great variety of discoveries in regard to the laws, or operations of nature, from which we have already derived very important aids in the common arts of life, and which may lead to farther improvements, surpassing all our present conceptions. The last *twenty years* have been greatly distinguished for the application of old principles to new and important designs, for the adaptation of machinery to almost every species of labor, and for successive improvements in different machines both in respect to the despatch, and to the perfection of their operations. These general improvements are conspicuous in our country ; they are among the principal glories of the present age in Great Britain ; and, I believe, they are exciting a good degree of emulation in almost every country in Europe ; while a kindred

spirit is diffusing itself more or less in other quarters of the world.

In *our* favored land, improvements may be traced in the implements and operations of HUSBANDRY. Still greater advances have been made in many of the *mechanic* arts, particularly in the facture of *nails*, and *cards*, and *cloth* of various kinds.

The wonderful advancements, which every one must have observed in many arts of secondary importance, suggests a query of unspeakable moment, viz : Whether the improvements, we have made in the means and methods of *common education*, correspond to those, which appear in other things, and to the superlative importance of the subject.

To this question the deepest convictions of my mind compel me to answer, No. It is unquestionable indeed, that our children spend more weeks and months in school than *we* did, and, I believe, they are generally furnished with better instructors ; while they have more books, and in many branches decidedly *better* books, than were formerly in use. But whatever may be said of our elementary books, or of the improved modes and methods of using them, I am perfectly satisfied, that there is still room for as great improve-

ments in some things of fundamental importance, as have within the last twenty years been made in the facture of *cards*, or the *navigation* of *rivers*. There is a principle in human nature, corresponding to the mightiest elements in the material world, which has hitherto been little regarded in the provision of books for common schools ; the principle of *CURIOSITY* ; that curiosity, which is the most prominent feature of the child ; which discovers itself in lisping infancy by a thousand inquiries about facts and reasons ; which, if carefully nourished, would “ grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength ;” operating on all the intellectual machinery as powerfully, as wind or steam in external nature. To avail ourselves of this principle, it is evident, we must cultivate the *UNDERSTANDING* ; we must make this the leading object of all our instructions. We must give children real information, and this information must, from the necessity of things, be such as they are capable of receiving and digesting. When they ask *milk*, we must not give them *meat*. Still less should we give them *stones* for *bread*. We must proceed gradually from the simplest things to those, which are more difficult, and must see that we do not overcharge their

minds with *wholesome* things, so as to produce satiety, disgust, and mental debility.

ESSAY II.

THE principles suggested in the former essay, appear to me the plainest dictates of philosophy and common sense ; and yet how little are they generally regarded in the education of the young ! How often are our children and youth launched upon the broad ocean of study without line or compass, or set blindfold to perform the most arduous labours ! In the study of *Greek*, for instance, a branch of learning, in which philosophy might be supposed to have entire control, the first four or five weeks are consumed in a slavish exertion of the memory, with scarcely one gleam of light directed to the understanding. This, I conceive, is just as wise, as it would be to require a pupil to commit all the definitions and rules of *arithmetic* from beginning to end, before he performed a single operation, or comprehended an individual principle. Instead of these four or five weeks, I should say that, after the alphabet

is thoroughly learned, a *single day*, employed on a few of the simplest forms of the noun, the adjective, and the verb, and three or four rules of syntax, is sufficient to prepare the learner for translating and parsing the first lessons of such a reading book, as we ought to have ; a book, so arranged as to illustrate, and impress on the mind gradually and successively, all the principles of grammar, at the very moment they are committed to memory. With such a book, and such a method, the progress of the learner would, I am persuaded, be unspeakably more rapid and thorough, while a tedious labour would be converted into *pleasure*. The like observations might be made on the study of Latin. If we would do any thing thoroughly, or if we would do it with the greatest possible despatch, we must see that we do not attempt too many things at once, nor too much of the same thing. A *child* may remove a mound of earth by little and little, on which, if attempted in the mass, the strongest *man* might expend all his efforts in vain.

The same inattention to the order of nature and reason is observable in the rudiments, and almost the whole progress of *English* reading. In some of the first lessons in spelling, the child is overwhelmed with words, which are totally un-

meaning to him ; many of which can hardly be considered, as belonging to the English language. A multitude of others are of no present use to children, while perhaps the greater part of those, for which they have an *immediate* demand, are excluded. The consequence is, that after having spent many a tedious month on their spellings, when they are put on reading sentences, they are every moment meeting with words, which, though perhaps familiar to their ears, are strangers to their eyes. In this situation they hesitate and stammer, and drawl out every word, exhausting their own spirits, and those of their instructor. Hence, I think we may emphatically ask, what is the use, or the proper design of a spelling-book ? Some perhaps may reply, It is to exercise the MEMORY of children ; to acquaint them with the PRONUNCIATION of words ; and to prepare them for writing correctly in subsequent life. All these things, indeed, may well be brought into view ; but, I contend, they should all be subordinate to another design, viz. that of training the child more directly and effectually for the *reading of sentences* ; that he may be enabled to read his first lesson of this kind with readiness, and propriety, and grace. So far as *memory* is the final object, that will receive better nourishment from

things than from the *shadows* of things; and still more, than from the shadow of shadows. I should as soon think of crowding the *stomach* of a child with food, which I knew he could not digest for one, two, four, six, or ten *years*, as I should of requiring him to learn the orthography, or pronunciation of words, which were either to be forgotten, or to lie, as a useless burden on his mind for the same period of time. The mind of the learner should be like the lumber room or depository of the cabinet-maker, where there is no superfluity, and no confusion; where the use and design of every article is understood, and where every thing is so thoroughly sorted and arranged, that, when required for use, it may be instantly found. Education, in all its branches, should be perfectly analogous to the gradual and direct process of nature, in rearing the tender germ of the *acorn* into the majestic *oak*. It should resemble the work of the *mason*, who begins at the *foundation*, not at the *top*, nor the MIDDLE of the *building*; who makes each course of stone or brick to answer the double purpose of filling its own proper place in the building and of preparing directly and immediately for the next course; and not a single brick is laid without accomplishing both these ends.

If I have not wholly misunderstood the dictates

of philosophy, this gradual, direct, and constant progress should appear in all the elementary books, employed in education, without excepting a single branch, as also in the method of *using* these books.

To begin then with the foundation, and of course, with that, which is most essential to the building we would rear, we want a primary book for children, which shall contain the alphabet, tables of syllables, lessons in sentences, consisting of words which are perfectly understood by children, and of previous lessons in spelling, in which every word contained in those sentences, shall be collected, and, as far as practicable, so arranged, as to suggest the proper pronunciation without the use of any key. Let the divisions of the books be such, that the child need not spell more than a hundred, or a hundred and fifty words, before he is put on reading the same words in composition. Let him, however, go over with those spellings, till they are as familiar to his eyes, as they are to his ears and to his understanding; till he can not only spell every word without missing a letter, but is able WITHOUT spelling to read the columns from top to bottom as fast, as he will ever have occasion to pronounce them. With this preparation, the child of four or five years will, at the first glance, read the follow-

ing sentences, more naturally, more gracefully, and of course more pathetically, than many of those adults, who have the reputation of orators. After the ingenious child has learned his letters and his abs, a very few *weeks*, I am persuaded, are sufficient for all this.

When we have thus disposed of one hundred of the shortest and most familiar words, we are to proceed in the same manner with another hundred of those which are a little longer; and then with another, and so on, till we have gone through with all the useful words, of which the young child, in all varieties of life and association, can be supposed to know the meaning. Here I conceive the spelling-book should end, and the dictionary commence; taking it as a leading, an all-controlling principle, that the child is not to be taught a single sentence, or *word*, without an endeavor to make him understand it. It appears to me indispensable to a good system of education, that we have books better adapted, than any I have yet seen, for teaching children the meaning of language. We want a dictionary, in which the words, that require the particular attention of the learner, shall, in some simple way or other, be distinguished on the one hand from those words which are already so familiar, as to render it more

than useless, to define them, and on the other hand, from those provincial, technical, and pedantic words, which in other points of view are equally objectionable, as exercises for the young. The intermediate class of words, which occur rarely in conversation, but frequently in elegant writing, require definition, in order to prepare the young to read, either with pleasure or profit, almost any book that will fall into their hands.— These definitions should not be such, as we often find in dictionaries and other books of that kind, which are still farther from the apprehension of the learner, than the very words they are intended to illustrate. A definition that is not understood, is no definition at all; it is calculated only to increase the evil, it professes to correct. Had we such a dictionary as we ought to have, I should say, that children should no longer be left as with few exceptions they always have been, to catch the meaning of words by accident, one in a day, or one in a week, or one in a month, perhaps, and after *fifty years*, to remain very imperfectly acquainted with that language, on which they must depend for all information and instruction, relative to those subjects, which cannot be presented immediately to their inspection. On the contrary, I contend, that in connection with or-

thography, the meaning of words should be systematically and directly taught, as an indispensable preparation for reading the higher species of composition ; and in order to realize the full benefit of those exercises, all the lessons in reading should be composed and arranged as far as may be, in such a manner, as to bring into immediate use, all the words which have been spelled and defined. By such a process, the child of common capacity would, I doubt not, by the time he was eight years old, be better acquainted with the language, than he now is at the age of fifteen. He would spell it better, he would understand it better, and he would read it *incomparably* better.

ESSAY III.

The principles laid down in the preceding essay are analogous, I think, to those which are constantly acted upon by all judicious persons in the ordinary business of life. In almost every employment, we may find those, who disregard those principles, as well as those who observe them ; and there is a striking contrast in the effects of

their exertions. One goes to work without considering what he wants, or what is necessary to secure the end, of which he has only an indistinct view. He spends a great deal of time and strength in collecting things, which are not only useless, but are an incumbrance to him; and when he proceeds to the execution of his design, he is every moment interrupted by the want of something, which he has not procured, and which perhaps he knows not where to find. All is hurry, and bustle, and fatigue; but little or nothing is effected. Another has a distinct view of his object; he considers what instruments and materials are necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose; and provides accordingly every thing necessary, but nothing superfluous. He arranges every thing in its proper place; and, as he proceeds in his operations, all is order, ease, and despatch. Much is done with little apparent effort. I appeal to every person of observation and reflection, whether the course, pursued by the former of these persons, does not bear a sad resemblance to the course generally pursued in teaching children the art of reading, and, on the other hand, whether the practice of the latter be not parallel to the method we are now recommending.

It is high time the subject engaged more general attention, than it ever has done; and I would

call not only on philosophers and men of learning, but on all persons, who are at all in the habit of thinking on common subjects, to contemplate the enormous evils, arising from the general course of early education.

The first evil, which presents itself in this view of things, is the great *waste of time*. If, with a little attention to method, our children might be enabled to acquire as much of real information in one year, as they now do in two, three, or four years, the aggregate loss to society is immense ; MUCH GREATER than would generally be supposed. While it is a very common error, it is a lamentable one, to regard the *time* of the *child*, as of little moment. It is neither station nor years, but mind, knowledge, and practical skill, which make the man, or the woman. If we look through society, we may find many adults, who are mere children, even in *bodily* labor, and still more in every *mental* exercise ; while on the other hand we see children, who, in every thing but *animal strength* and *stature*, are men and women. Let the year, for instance, between four and five be lost, it is lost forever. The child is one year longer in coming to maturity ; and no subsequent exertions can ever make him what he might otherwise have been.

But the loss of time, great as it is, is very far

from being the PRINCIPAL evil, arising from the want of method in common education. While our children make little progress in real information, they are rendered in a measure *incapable* of *future* proficiency. The understanding cannot long be neglected without being stunted, if not thoroughly blighted. The mind as naturally hungers for truth, as the body does for animal food; and it is no less unphilosophical and unwise, not to say inhuman, to neglect this natural craving in the one case, than it is in the other. We should make it as much a principle of conscience and of feeling to supply our children with mental food every day, and if possible every hour, as we do to provide them with their necessary meals. I do not mean that they should be kept constantly at their books, nor that we should be perpetually delivering them lectures, which are addressed more to their ears than to their apprehensions, but that we should accomodate ourselves to their natural curiosity; that we should encourage and answer their questions, and adapt all our instructions to their understandings, so that every day may add something to the strength and capacity of their minds. But, alas, how far is this from what we generally see in our schools, where for several years at least, the memory and the tongue are every thing, and the understanding nothing!

Some, however, may ask, by way of objection to what has been said, If the understanding is thus neglected, and if the natural consequence of such neglect is to blight the mind, and render it incapable of future cultivation, how happens it that we see so many rising superior to these disadvantages, and displaying through the whole course of their lives so much intellectual vigor? To this question I answer, that the mind of the child, however neglected, is not entirely without nourishment. Like the young animal, it picks up for itself here and there something to sustain its life, and contribute to its gratification. In general it is not in schools, but in the common intercourse of life, that the *meaning of language* is learned, and that the child is formed to a capacity for receiving any kind of instruction whatever. Wherever he goes, wherever he is, he sees something, from which he learns something; by which his mind is kept from falling into a state of torpor;—by which it is nourished, and strengthened, and entertained. In general the common school has never been, as it should have been, the principal nursery of thought. It has not been the house of *feasting*, but the house of *fasting*; where there has been almost as little employment, or recreation for the mind, as there has been for the limbs.

I am aware it may be said, there is a vast dif-

ference between those children who have been educated in the common schools, and those who have had no such advantages ; a difference, which continues through the whole period of life ; and this may seem incompatible with the representations above. The fact is readily acknowledged, but it may be accounted for in a different manner ; for it is remarkable, that those children, who are kept from school, have in general few, or no advantages at home. Their parents for the most part are both ignorant and vicious. They give their children no instruction ; they set them no good example ; they neither attend public worship themselves, nor provide their children with such apparel, as would render it decent for them to attend.

That we are much more indebted to the common intercourse of life, than we are to the instruction of schools, for the information of our minds and the diffusion of practical knowledge, is apparent from the fact that many of the most useful and most respectable men, our country has ever produced, have been those, who enjoyed very little benefit from literary instruction of any kind, whether public or private, but who became what they were, by the habit of observation, and a free intercourse with the world. Far be it from me, however, to represent that schools are not of the

highest importance. The preceding observations have been made with the sole design of exposing some of the enormous evils, arising from the inveterate custom of paying incomparably more attention to the memory, than we do to the understanding, in the exercises of our common schools.

ESSAY IV.

WE have noticed some grand defects in the modes of instruction, generally pursued in the common schools, and particularly in relation to *language*. It is a notorious and undeniable fact, that in these schools, with very few exceptions, it has never been a leading object, nor scarcely any object at all, to make children acquainted with the meaning of words. Some of their first exercises have been composed in a great measure of words, of which they knew nothing, for which they had no use, and in which, of course, they could not possibly feel an interest; and this inattention to their wants and feelings, and to the final object of all their studies, has, till very lately, appeared through the whole course of their spelling

and reading. Two incalculable evils, arising from this neglect of method in the fundamental branches of education, were in some measure developed in my last essay, viz. The vast sacrifice of time, and the irreparable injury done to the understanding by this long and systematic neglect.

Another and a distinct evil, arising from this neglect, is the *discouragement*, which prevents many children from exerting the little mind they have. As no exertions are made either to cherish and gratify their curiosity, or to inform their minds; as all is dark before them, around them, and within them; as they can see no use in the laborious studies to which they are called; it is not to be supposed, that they should enjoy any pleasure in them; and where they feel no satisfaction, they will not long discover any ardour. Instead of a few *days*, our children are kept toiling for *weeks*, and *months*, and frequently for *years*, on a dry and insipid spelling-book; and after all this intolerable drudgery, when they are put on reading sentences, they are totally unprepared to pronounce many of the shortest and simplest words. The consequence in regard to many is an unconquerable disgust with their books. To overcome this difficulty, we constantly appeal to the *ambition* of children, the only principle indeed, on which we can rely, after their natural

curiosity is extinct. We teach them to compare themselves one with another; to study, not to learn what is useful, but to excel, or to rise above their fellows. In this way many indeed are excited, and made willing to labor from week to week and from month to month on things, which, to them, are perfectly nonsensical. But whatever advantages may arise from appealing to such a motive, they are counterbalanced by great disadvantages. Children who are most capable of excelling, are rendered more studious and more successful by it; but those, to whom nature has been less favorable, and for whom above all others we ought to consult, are proportionally disheartened. The former become vain, and the latter envious and idle. From idleness the transition is very easy to almost every species of mischief and disorder; and what was intended for a school of wisdom and virtue, too often becomes a school of vice and folly.

Such are some of the evils, resulting from the general neglect of that grand incentive to mental exertion, natural curiosity, and the constant appeal that is made to the spirit of emulation. But the evils do not close here. Generally, those who are disgusted with the books at school, neglect them through their whole life. The many hours, which might be spent in useful reading, are consumed

either in idleness or dissipation. Such persons are comparatively useless and unhappy, if not nuisances to society, and frequently come to an ignominious end. These unhappy tendencies of things, alas, receive no very powerful check from the public institutions of religion. Many children are not encouraged in attending on these institutions; and those who are, understand very little of what they hear. As they have never been taught the meaning of language, nor the exercise of their understandings, scarcely one sentence in five is intelligible to them, before the age of ten or twelve years: and long before this period they may have formed the habit of hearing without attention, a habit which may be lasting as life.

I would therefore call upon every tender parent, to interest himself in a subject, so vitally important to the temporal and eternal welfare of his children. And I would entreat the enlightened PATRIOT and PHILANTHROPIST to engage with ardor and perseverance in effecting a reformation, on which the prosperity of millions depends.

The spirit of the age is the spirit of improvement; and this spirit is constantly increasing in zeal and activity. Every breath of PHILOSOPHY, every breath of LIBERTY and every breath of genuine CHRISTIANITY fans the flame of generous enterprise; and the progress of philosophy, liberty

and christianity, renders it almost certain, that great improvement in the system of INSTRUCTION must and will take place.

APPENDIX.

The reader who was not before acquainted with the fact, is hereby informed that since the first publication of the preceding essays, a series of books, intended to facilitate the course, which is there recommended, has been published. The first, entitled the Franklin Primer, of which twelve editions have already appeared; the second, entitled the Improved Reader, of which more than twenty editions have been published, the third, under the title of the General Class-Book, of which thirteen editions have been published, and the fourth, entitled the Popular Reader, just published at the close of the year 1834. The object of the four books is to carry the child by an easy and gradual process from his alphabet to such acquaintance with the meaning, as well as the orthography and pronunciation of common language, as will enable him to read with understanding and grace any book on a popular subject, which is written in a style either simple or elegant; while the lessons in reading will, as it is hoped, be found equal, if not superior

to any others of the kind, in respect to the useful information they will impart, the entertainment they will afford, and the moral effects they are calculated to produce.

The size of the Primer is 54 pages, 18mo. that of the Improved Reader 186, the General Class-Book 324, and the Popular Reader 353, 12mo.

In regard to mechanical execution, the proprietor intends hereafter to print these books on two or three different kinds of paper, common and fine, and if desired, will put them in different modes of binding, thus providing at once for the convenience of the poor, and the gratification of those, with whom the saving of a few cents in the price of a book, is a matter of little comparative importance. Both however will be furnished on moderate terms.

The books may be had on application to the publisher, *A. Phelps*, Greenfield Mass. Also of *Wm. Peirce*, and *Crocker & Brewster*, Boston.

School Committees, judicious parents, members of Lyceums, and all who feel an interest in the mental and moral improvement of society, are respectfully requested to examine and decide for themselves, how far the books are calculated to remove some radical defects in our modes of education; and the query is humbly suggested to the trustees of academies and the instructors of other schools for similar purposes, whether a course of study like that which is furnished in the *General Class Book*, would not tend to supply some of the greatest and the most frequent defects of those, who are to be employed in the instruction of common schools.

To justify appeals, which in the view of some, perhaps, might otherwise seem arrogant, the following notices and recommendations are subjoined.

The Franklin Primer.

Extract from a review of the Franklin Primer, published in the American Journal of Education.

“This little book is one of the most ingenious improvements in this branch of instruction, that has hitherto been recorded in our Journal. We would not leave this highly meritorious production, without adverting to its excellent adaptation to the minds of very young children. *All* the reading lessons are simple, easy, intelligible, and natural in their style; and they will prepare the little learner to read with an unassuming and lively manner, in works of a higher order.”

From the Teacher's Guide, printed at Portland, (Me.)
—*Extract.*

“The FRANKLIN PRIMER contains some of the best lessons we have ever seen. The style and sentiments are perfectly suited to the capacity of a child, and is expressed in language which a child understands. It is the style of conversation. It is simple, natural and lively. It is well suited to banish monotony, artificial tones, and every species of dulness in reading, and to form a habit of reading with emphasis, with spirit, with propriety.”

In a communication published in the Christian Register, of Jan. 1829, printed in Boston, a writer under the signature of “W. R.” while recommending the American Lyceum, speaks incidentally of the Franklin Primer, in the following terms :

“That excellent little Book, the best, perhaps, of its kind, in the English language.”

From Josiah Holbrook, Esq. of Boston, Author of Easy Lessons in Geometry, the Improved Apparatus for Infant Schools, and Lecturer on School Keeping, Lyceums, &c.

“It gives me pleasure to state it as my opinion that the method of learning the names and sounds of letters and of the first elements of a literary education adopted in the Franklin Primer, is founded upon the Philosophy of the Mind, and fitted for the pleasing and rapid improvement of children, and worthy to be adopted in every school of elementary instruction.”

The Improved Reader.

From the Christian Register, published in Boston.

"THE IMPROVED READER.—"This seems to us a valuable book. It is designed to make intelligent and thorough readers, and to remedy the ancient evil of children toiling through book after book, and at last reading like machines, without intelligence or grace. It is the introduction and use of school books like this, which is to rid the land of automaton teachers and pupils."

From the Rev. Theophilus Packard, D. D.

"Having examined the 'Improved Reader,' it appears, in my view, well calculated for our Common Schools. The method of introducing as parts of lessons the definitions of words difficult to be understood by young children, is excellent. The pieces, select and original, will doubtless be interesting and profitable to the youthful mind."

THEOPHILUS PACKARD.

From the Hon. Samuel C. Allen, Member of Congress.
—*Extract.*

"In both these works," speaking of the Franklin Primer, and the Improved Reader, "it has been the design of the author to adapt the instruction to the capacity of the pupil, and to keep alive his curiosity by presenting to his mind new subjects always within his grasp in every stage of his progress."

"He has, it is believed, achieved what could not be done but by the union of philosophy and experience, and has given to the public a book which will aid and interest the young mind and expedite its course of improvement."

SAMUEL C. ALLEN.

From Rev. S. M. Worcester, late Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, in Amherst College.

"I am happy to express my approbation of the 'Improved Reader.' It richly merits the patronage of the public."

S. M. WORCESTER.

From Rev. Thomas Shepard.

"In regard to the Improved Reader, I am pleased with the outlines of the work. Its design is excellent, its style simple and chaste."

THOS. SHEPARD.

The General Class-Book.

Extract from a review of the work by Rev. Winthrop Bailey.

“Without undertaking any thing like an analysis of the work, we would merely say that it contains all which the title page implies. There is a great variety in the pieces; they are short, instructive and interesting; they are calculated to excite and gratify the curiosity of the young; they communicate much useful information. These pieces render this work one of the most useful and entertaining books for reading in school, with which we are acquainted; so that in a very cheap form it will be found to answer the double purpose of aiding children in acquiring the orthography and pronunciation of our language, and imparting to them in familiar terms, a knowledge of many important facts in history, in the arts, and in common life.”

Extracts from a letter to the Author from Hon. W. B. Calkoun, for several years Chairman of the Committee on Education in the Legislature of Massachusetts, and afterward Speaker of the House of Representatives.

In reference to the Franklin Primer, the Improved Reader, and the General Class-Book, he says, “I gave them a very thorough examination, and found them so peculiarly adapted to the wants of children in the early stages of education, that I recommended their introduction into our schools at once. They are just the kind of books that are needed, as I think, to make the business of education pleasant and useful. Of all things that can be put in the way of young children, the spelling book is the most mischievous; I mean as connected with the business of learning. The child should from the outset understand every thing, as he goes along. This is evidently the object and scheme of your books; and they must answer the purpose. I congratulate you, Sir, most sincerely, upon the happy changes, which they must be the means of effecting in the system of early education.”

Extracts from a review of the Franklin Primer, Improved Reader, and General Class-Book, published in the North American Review.

“We can say with truth, that these books are certainly

well adapted to the purpose for which they are intended by their highly deserving author, and may be recommended to the attention of parents and teachers."

From the American Journal of Education.

At the close of a review of a little work entitled "Essays on the Philosophy of Instruction," the Editor alludes to the *Franklin Primer, Reader, &c.* as follows:—They "are intended to obviate prevailing evils in the manner of teaching the English language, and though susceptible of some improvements, are, on the whole, excellently adapted to their object. They are arranged as follows: the *Franklin Primer*, uniting the purpose both of a primer, and in some measure, of a spelling-book; the *Improved Reader*, an interesting explanatory reading book, of the introductory order; and the *General Class-Book*, containing, among other useful and original matter, a specimen of a familiar school dictionary of definitions and explanations."

Extracts from a notice of the Franklin Primer, the Improved Reader, and the General Class-Book, in the Christian Examiner and General Review, published in Boston, Liverpool and London.

"Such a book" as the *Primer*, "followed by others adapted to the progressive improvement of the understanding may well supersede the various spelling-books which have, been so long used, and which have so long abused the innocent child, with their fearful and interminable array of words, no less repulsive from their length, than from the utter worthlessness of a great portion of them."

"In the *Improved Reader*, the author keeps his plan steadily in view. It provides for an easy transition from the greatest possible simplicity of language and thought contained in the *Primer*, to what requires a little more advancement of intellect. Still, however, no steps are leaped over, and nothing is left unexplained. It proceeds from the well known to what is less known, from shorter and more common words, to those which are longer and less familiar; presenting a few new words in each successive lesson, which are intelligibly defined. One other circumstance is worth mentioning, namely; the three artificial marks for the

inflections of voice, are of more value than would readily be conceived by one who has not attended to the subject."

"The General Class-book, besides the instructions given concerning orthography and pronunciation, consists principally of exercises in reading chiefly in prose, on a great variety of useful subjects, instructive in their character, plain in style, not soaring into the regions of fancy or fiction."

"What has so generally been made a task, and a loathsome one, he (the author) has converted into a pleasure and a pastime. Every thing is done to encourage the learner. And encouragement seems to be all that is wanting in beginning to learn, in the first steps of the infant pupil. He has enough of curiosity and desire, if they are properly met by the parent or teacher: and he will advance incomparably faster in this way, than by a given task, enforced against his will."

"Besides the pleasure which proceeds from understanding the lessons, which are read, by which the feeling of a disgusting task is removed, actual improvement in the manner of reading is an all-important effect of the plan adopted by the author."

"The author of the books, which we take pleasure in noticing, and in asking for them the attention of our readers, does not claim the praise of originality: but he has carried forward his plan of facile instruction more completely than is done in any similar book in our language, which has come to our knowledge. It is a subject not unworthy the attention of great and good men; a subject which has been strangely neglected, certainly in our own country."

"We should be carried too far in our limits, were we here to give our views of the facilities and improvements which are still to be desired in various branches of study, and must content ourselves with the expression of our good wishes to the author of the little books before us, and of our hopes, that they may operate a change in our common schools, as salutary as his most sanguine desires and expectations may lead him to predict."

From the Hingham Gazette.

The Franklin Primer, the Improved Reader, and the General Class-Book. "I have now before me the opinions of

twenty-six enlightened judges of the subject, who give it as their decided belief that they will be the 'means of effecting the most happy changes in the systems of early education.' The certificates are from Presidents, Professors, Tutors, Instructors, &c. of every class and denomination throughout the country."

The following notice of the Franklin Primer, Improved Reader, and General Class-Book, is taken from an article of considerable extent in the "Revue Encyclopedique," a periodical work of high character, published in Paris.

"Cette serie de lectures est faite dans un excellent esprit, et par une personne, qui a evidemment etudie et approfondi le sujet qu'elle aborde." "The reading lessons are composed with an excellent spirit, by a person, who has evidently given much attention to the subject."

From a gentleman in Troy, N. Y. who has been long engaged as a Teacher.

"In regard to the Franklin Primer, the Improved Reader and the General Class-Book, it is my settled conviction, (after three years' constant trial in the same school, and by the same scholars,) that they are the best decidedly that I have ever used or seen."

From Mr. L. Bailey, Principal of the Utica Classical, and Commercial Lyceum.

"MR. PHELPS,

"Sir—I have carefully examined the series of reading, spelling and defining books, published by you, viz. the Franklin Primer, Improved Reader, and General Class Book, and do not hesitate to aver, that they are better adapted to the capacities of young scholars, and better calculated to facilitate their acquisition of the English language, than any similar books, that have come under my eye; and from the success which I have had in the use of the two latter, with my younger pupils, I do most cordially recommend them to the perusal of all, who are engaged in the arduous employment of educating youth."

L. BAILEY.

Principal of the Utica C. and C. Lyceum.

This series of School Books is also recommended by the Teacher's Society of Troy, N. Y., Rev. Alvah Sanford, Prin-

Principal of a Literary Institution, Medina, Ohio, Professor Sparrow, acting President of Kenyon College, Ohio, Rev. John S. Wilson, Principal of the Literary Institution, Lawrenceville, Geo., and various others.

The Popular Reader.

From the School Committee of Northampton, consisting of Rev. Dr. Penney, and Rev. Messrs. Todd and Stearns.—Extract.

“So far as we have examined the Popular Reader, we have formed an opinion decidedly favorable, and have no doubt that it will prove a valuable auxiliary to the cause of Education.”

From Mr. J. H. Coffin, Principal of the Fellenberg Academy and Self-Supporting Institution, Greenfield, Mass.

“I have examined with some care, a book entitled ‘The Popular Reader,’ intended as a reading book for the higher classes in common schools and Academies, and am of opinion that the choice selection of pieces which it contains, together with its valuable lexicography, and Rules for Reading, render it far superior to most works of a similar design now in use. In fact, as it regards usefulness and superior adaptation to the wants of Common Schools, I hardly know of its equal. The best effects, it seems to me, must follow, wherever it is introduced. If the teacher does his duty, it cannot fail of this result.”

From Mr. Edward W. B. Canning, A. M. Teacher of a Select English and Classical School.

COL. PHELPS :—

I have just finished a somewhat critical review of a valuable school book, recently published by yourself, entitled “The Popular Reader.” *Popular* indeed, it deserves to be, and I am fully persuaded will be, when the public shall have been made acquainted with its merits. I had heard much in its praise before I was favored with its perusal; but an examination of it has more than substantiated

all the eulogies it has elicited from others. It is Sir, with warm feelings of admiration, that I add my humble tribute to its praise. Its selections are remarkably chaste, its lexicography correct and excellent, and its typographical execution surpasses any school book of its price, within my knowledge. But not to enter into a particular detail of its peculiar excellencies, which have been largely treated of by other reviewers, it will suffice to say, that the work carries upon its very face, the strongest evidence of the accurate taste and happy discernment of its author, united with a thorough knowledge of what is most calculated to attract and amuse, while it instructs and improves the young. Its intrinsic worth challenges universal favor, and must surely give it its due place—in advance of every rival. On the whole, it seems in every respect, to “bear acquaintance,” and unlike some elementary works that *have been* popular, will, I am confident, wear well. Let School Committees, and those who have charge of pupils acquaint themselves with this important supplement to a common education, and the Popular Reader will be speedily known wherever there are youth to read, and approved as extensively as it is known.

I am, dear Sir, yours with respect,
E. W. B. CANNING.

Extract from a review of the work in the New England Magazine for November.

“We commend the whole series, but the Popular Reader most especially, to the attention of parents and teachers, and the public guardians of education. We assure them that this last is no hasty and careless compilation. It is the fruit of long and laborious research, guided by exceeding delicacy of taste, and the nicest moral sensibility. Nothing can be better calculated to breathe a taste for pure and elevated literature into the minds of our common youth: we desire and hope, therefore, that it will be the Popular Reader and Complete Scholar not only in name, but in fact and truth, by coming into general use.”

From Mr. L. Tenney, Teacher of the Model Class, at the Teacher's Seminary, Andover.

“I am highly pleased with the appearance of this new book, so well adapted to the wants of our High Schools

and public Seminaries generally. Having understood much of the author's design in preparing this work, and having for seven years seen the happiest results from the use of his preceding works, I am induced to recommend it as a reading book, in preference to any other with which I am acquainted."

The Christian Register, in a notice of the Popular Reader, speaks thus of the whole series :

"No series of school books for reading lessons, within our knowledge, is so well adapted to conduct the child, from the very simplest words and combination of words, onward, by regular gradations, to a relish for tasteful and elegant writing. And through the whole much pains is taken to enable the pupil to read intelligibly, which he will do if his instructor is faithful to the author's plan, and uses the means which he furnishes for that purpose."

From Rev. Emerson Davis, Principal of the Westfield Academy, to the publisher.

WESTFIELD, Oct. 1834.

Dear Sir,

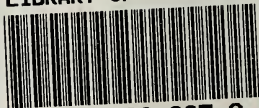
"I have examined the Popular Reader, and am pleased with the plan and matter of the book. One of the great obstacles that retard the progress of youth in knowledge in our Academies, is an inability to read intelligibly; a scholar may read fluently and not understand what he reads. There has not been sufficient attention paid hitherto, to the meaning of words. The Popular Reader in my opinion, surpasses all other reading books in defining more words, in annexing illustrations to the words defined, and in reference throughout the book to the definitions given in preceding chapters. If the school teacher does his duty, the scholar who uses the Popular Reader, cannot fail to understand what he reads."

E. DAVIS, *Principal of the Westfield Academy.*

☞ *The Popular Reader is also recommended by Professor Hitchcock, of Amherst College, Rev. Wm. Allen, President of Bowdoin College, the School Committee of Greenfield, Mass. and various others.*



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